

TRINACRIA

Poems, Translations, Essays, Reviews



Issue No. 6

Fall 2011

TRINACRIA

Joseph S. Salemi
Editor and Publisher

All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor at:

TRINACRIA

220 Ninth Street
Brooklyn, New York 11215-3902
U.S.A.

TRINACRIA is published twice a year, in the Spring and the Fall. Issues of the journal are numbered consecutively. There are no subscriptions, but individual copies of TRINACRIA may be purchased at the cover price. Two complimentary copies are given to each contributor in every issue. Checks for any other copies should be made out to Joseph S. Salemi.

Copyright © 2011 by Joseph S. Salemi
ISSN 1944-8759

TRINACRIA is privately printed and privately distributed.

An abbreviated version of every issue of TRINACRIA can be viewed at: www.trinacriapoetry.com.

THE CLARITY OF COMPLEXITY

When I first began to think about starting TRINACRIA, I toyed with the idea of having the following as the magazine's watchword: *Intelligible poetry for intelligent readers*. This was to be in reaction against the absurd *trobar clus* of much contemporary work, where modernist ellipticality and self-referential narcissism have become standard. I remember Gerald Harnett of *Hellas* used to be so vexed by the pretentious mystification of modern poetry that he proposed going to readings with a placard bearing the words WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? He suggested that the placard be prominently lifted and waved whenever anyone read a pointlessly unintelligible poem.

Well, of course it's easy to slip from Gerry's understandable impatience with surrealist garbage into the know-nothing populism that despises any sort of complexity or scholarly references in a poem. Poetry, after all, is not a New England town meeting. There's nothing inherently democratic about it, and it has no obligation to speak to the greatest number of people. How strange that this truth goes unquestioned when it comes to science or mathematics or philosophy, but is subject to fierce contestation when applied to poetry.

The typical reason adduced for arguing that poetry should be widely accessible is the contention that it is one of the "humanities," and as such it should be linguistically available and easily intelligible to all. This silly idea is rooted in two historically fortuitous and culturally conditioned beliefs: an Enlightenment notion of universal political equality, and a naïve misunderstanding of how the word "humanities" is used in literary discourse.

The Latin phrase for what we would call literature or literary studies is *litterae humaniores*. It refers to "letters" in the strict sense of things written down, but distinguished from business contracts or documents or other mundane records by the fact that they are connected with those genres or subjects that elevate a person to a higher level of human sophistication than he would have without them. In other words, an appreciation of literature lifts one up to the *achievement* of human status. This is why the comparative form of the

adjective (*humaniores*) is used. Understanding and valuing literature makes one more human than those who lack these qualities.

Before everyone starts screeching about my right-wing reactionary elitism, let me follow this up with a crucial addendum. Poetry is allowed to be complex and intricate and difficult, *but it is not allowed to be intrinsically unintelligible*. It must be part of an inherited world of discourse, grounded in accepted canons of intelligibility, logic, and conventional use of language. The obstinate rejection of this addendum, partially by classical modernism and totally by postmodernism, is what has strangled poetry to near death. Gerald Harnett was right—if a poem has no rational connection to the real world, and completely flouts the conventions of discourse, logic, correct usage, and our cultural history, then it deserves to be picketed with angry placards of protest. And don't start quoting Lewis Carroll to me... it only shows that you're a non-serious trifler.

In TRINACRIA I have published many poems that could be construed as “difficult,” in the sense that a full understanding of them was possible only if the reader had a sophisticated vocabulary, a knowledge of past literature and Western history, and linguistic skills beyond English. I consider such poems—if well crafted—to be deserving of publication, even though the average dork doesn't understand them. But I will *not* publish postmodernist or surrealist crap that undermines the very structure of reason and rationally coherent language. In TRINACRIA you can be playful, obscure, witty, descriptive, complex, obscene, scholarly, loving, sarcastic, inventive, hateful, facetious, offensive, religious, or any other adjective that can be applied to excellent poems in the great European tradition. But you can't be a navel-gazing twit who writes in his own secret idiom about his own private world. I won't have it.

And now it's time to announce the Pushcart Prize nominees for Issue #5. Here they are, in alphabetical order:

- C.B. Anderson for his “Late-Fifties Lament,” a precisely etched indictment of modern social and moral decay, combined with the wry remembrance of earlier certainties, and capped by a final reference to one of our presidents, “The Iron Hewer.”

- Sally Cook for her “Making All Things Orderly,” a series of perfect quatrains that links the destruction of gardens with the lust for conformism, employing an unusual ABCA rhyme scheme that is maintained throughout.
- Daniel Fernandez for his “Beyond Binary Systems,” a meditation on the interplay of unity and duality in existence, as it manifests itself in our flesh, our relations, and even in our final dissolution.
- Claudia Gary for her “Storm Warning,” a wonderful trimeter poem on the perils of walking on ice, with an ominous suggestion of something much more threatening than the hazards of inclement weather.
- Karen Kelsay for her “The Courtship Hour,” a gorgeous evocation of a brief hour towards the end of day, done in language that makes full and unrestricted use of all the resources of descriptive rhetoric.
- Paul Lake for his “Plumber’s Song,” a mixed tetrameter/pentameter lampoon of Joseph Campbell’s “Follow your bliss” cliché, brilliantly placed in the mouth of a sewerage expert.

These are six first-rate poems, combining complexity with clarity. They neither patronize the reader by being baby-simple, nor do they keep him at arm’s length with surrealist absurdities or bohemian-modernist postures. They are what good poetry always was, and what we at TRINACRIA will labor to make it again. *Deo volente.*

Joseph S. Salemi
Woodside, New York

Table of Contents

Poetry

Wesli Court.....	8-13
Peter Austin.....	14-16
Tom Riley.....	17
Catharine Savage Brosman.....	18-21
Don Thackrey.....	22-23
Claudia Gary.....	24-25
T.S. Kerrigan.....	26-28
Arthur Mortensen.....	29
Leo Yankevich.....	30-31
Carol A. Taylor.....	32-33
Frank White.....	34-36
Laura J. Bobrow.....	37-39
Juliana Beedy.....	41-49
Melissa Peralta-Hovejos.....	50
Jared Carter.....	51
Michael R. Burch.....	52-53
David W. Landrum.....	54-58
Christopher Bittner.....	59
E.M. Schorb.....	60
Derek Burgoyne.....	61-62
Frederick Feirstein.....	63-65
Douglas G. Brown.....	66-68
Russell Bittner.....	70
Angelique Wellish.....	71
Richard O'Connell.....	72-73
Jorge Luis Borges (<i>translated by Richard O'Connell</i>).....	74
Félix Lope de Vega (<i>translated by Richard O'Connell</i>).....	75
X.J. Kennedy.....	76
Candace Ruggieri.....	77
Malcolm Paige.....	78
Daniel Fernandez.....	79
Sally Cook.....	80-83

J.B. Sisson.....	84-85
Karen Kelsay.....	86-89
Jennifer Reeser.....	90-93
Ágnes Gergely (<i>translated by Z. Ozsváth and F. Turner</i>).....	94-95
Sándor Weöres (<i>translated by Z. Ozsváth and F. Turner</i>).....	96-97
Lee Slonimsky.....	98
David Alpaugh.....	99
C.B. Anderson.....	100-103
Stanisław Grochowiak (<i>translated by Leo Yankevich</i>).....	104-105
Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz (<i>translated by Leo Yankevich</i>).....	106
Joseph S. Salemi.....	107-111

Prose

Derek Burgoyne, <i>An Interview</i>	112-127
J.B. Sisson, <i>Longfellow Redivivus</i>	128-130
Joseph S. Salemi, <i>Some Clarifications</i>	131-134
Contributors.....	135-136
Statement of Core Principles.....	137-138

Peter Austin

The Test

*Herbert Chilepo Avenue is in Harare's red light district.
Virginity testing is widespread in Zimbabwe, where it is
commonly believed that sex with a virgin cures AIDS.*

It happened at Emmanuel's behest:
His daughters—Daya (twelve), Nyasa (ten)
And Chuma (nine) would undergo the test.
Each on a pallet lay; the crabbed doyenne
Spitted her on a finger, black as crow,
Mumbled a verdict, moved on down the row.

Chuma and Daya failed. Chuma knew why
But didn't dare admit she'd been possessed
By Uncle Jabulani, in the sty
Where baba's pigs lived. Daya, who had guessed
Wherein *her* error lay, turned hot of hue
At what she'd let her roving fingers do.

Both were unmarriageable, both dishoused.
Nyasa, most amenable of maids,
After a round of bargaining was spoused
To Moyo (forty), who was sick with AIDS...
Their father took his *son* to someone who
Worked on Herbert Chilepo Avenue.

Claudia Gary

Temporary Tattoo

Without your cap and shades
and tired pink flamingo
you're nearly as God made you:

replete with escapades,
averse to tired lingo.
I have no wish to trade you.

The decal peels and fades,
your shoulder lets one wing go,
and I would serenade you.

Mad Money

In your pocket or your purse
just in case you've roamed too far,
are unable to converse
or have lost your repertoire,
there you'll find it: Lucre's curse?
Or the vapor of a star?
Or a chance to re-rehearse
who the hell you think you are?

Leo Yankevich

Journey Late at Night

My little boat unmoored,
I've drifted under stars,
but do not see the Lord,
just Artemis and Mars.

Above the deep, dark lake,
the moonlight's never said:
dawn is about to break
and heaven turn bright red.

Across the waves, an owl
has borne away its prey,
and something on the prow
blasphemes the light of day.

The hope a mooncalf follows
is sacrifice for slaughter,
and yet the wings of swallows
still skip across the water.

Carol A. Taylor

A Small Calamity

I won't see you in September,
won't be with you as we planned...
nights spent recreating daydreams,
talk of books and God and man,
breakfast wine and midnight ice cream,
rustic rambles hand in hand...
I won't see you in September,
won't be with you as we planned.

Sunrise comes on time each morning;
ashes cool; stock markets trade;
we resume our scheduled programs;
anthems ring; ball games are played.
What is one small drop of water
or a single grain of sand?
I won't see you in September,
won't be with you as we planned.

Laura J. Bobrow

At (Or Rather On) the Shore

Stark terrors underneath the sea
upset my equanimity.
A flashing glimpse, a hollow sound,
a blob of flesh that's washed aground
predicate a lurid scene
of deep abyss and labyrinthine
recesses where kraken lurk
to ply their fiendish water work,
and polyps gape and shark teeth glint
while waiting for the merest hint
of unsuspecting little toe
to venture where no foot should go.

That monsters do exist makes sense.
Consider this for evidence:
A boy I knew, his name was Jim,
ignored the signs and went to swim.
We saw some blood and heard a shriek
and that was Jim, or so to speak,
for folks could never tell for sure
from the remaining armature.
Which is why I must decline
your "Come on in. The water's fine."
Though prey to sand fly, crab and leech,
I'll take my chances on the beach.

Frederick Feirstein

Daydreaming

You contemplate a European lake
Where picnickers enact a comedy
Of Aryan romance: an ingénue

Eludes a subtle pass a soldier makes;
A chunky salesman, drunk and oniony,
Gooses a widow as she's dishing stew.

You're spooning chocolate mousse or German cake,
Enjoying temporary sanity.
You see the agony awaiting you:

The nightmare when the twentieth century wakes
Amidst the litter of the bourgeoisie.
You see this as an analyst and Jew.

It doesn't matter what discoveries you make
About the psyche and its history.
Time and the world will have its way with you.

Yet for a moment, the future is opaque.
You're laughing with your living family.
The day is sunny and the lake is blue.

Richard O'Connell

Selected Epigrams

Nobel Surpriser

Explain his fame and foreign veneration?
He reads much better in a bad translation.

Student Revolting

And then this little ball of hair and fat
Got up to talk about the proletariat.

To a Demonstrator

I am "against humanity" you say.
Perhaps.
 But that excludes you anyway.

Redaction

The owl that guards the grammarian's tomb
Correctly hoots:
 to-whit, to-whom.

To a Ph.D.

.
If brevity is the soul of wit,
Your dissertation is the corpse of it.

Mushroom U

“Faculty are like mushrooms,”
I heard an administrator remark.
“Feed ’em lots of horseshit
And keep ’em in the dark.”

On an Archaic Cypris

On her paps shivers still the Paphian foam
Fresh as the salt spray bursting on smooth stone.

—from *Selected Epigrams* (1990)

X.J. Kennedy

Roman Revel

inspired by Horace, Odes I: 9, 27, 36, 38

When winter gales emit shrill wails
The season's ripe for earnest drinking:
Build high the fires of reason's pyres!
Cast off our togas and get stinking!

This chosen night we'll not invite
Our wives, those nagging hags and dragons,
But pink-cheeked lads, sweet undergrads,
For faithful fillers of our flagons.

Strike lyre and feast! Consume at least
A side of beef, some sautéed gammon!
On flights of squab we'll do a job
And schools of marinated salmon.

The gods be thanked, before we're tanked,
Our rods of pleasure will start rising
And ere it's late we'll lubricate
Some slippery thighs with spurts surprising.

Malcolm Paige

Opening the Vagina Monologues

A play [The Vagina Monologues] that claims to unveil the truth about vaginas, but somehow overlooks the salutary role men play in most women's sexuality, has no credibility.

—Wendy McElroy

Ladies, we are here today to transgress sexist morals—
We'll spread our legs and celebrate, and give each other laurels!
An open mike for genitals, a voice for your pudenda!
And no one be embarrassed as we bare our twats to render
A true account of how we feel, expressing through our crotches
The way men have besmirched our flesh, degrading it with blotches!

Let your coochie speak its mind. Your sisters will adore a
Heartfelt allocution from your *labia minora*.
Vulvas have a need to talk, for they've been choked to silence
By pantyhose and tampon plugs and patriarchal violence.
All of that's a way to keep us meek and in our places,
Like iron clamps around our groins, or muzzles on our faces.

A pussy needs to air its views in unrestrained expression.
You can't deny a snatch the right to protest male oppression.
Today we follow Cicero, and not the slutty Venus.
Our twitchets long to open wide, and—*No! Not for a penis!*—
Throw that guy out! Oooh, these men! Their sordid expectations!
We cunts are now assembled for some major declarations.

Sally Cook

Through the Year with a Lover

What do most lovers want? You never know.
It varies. In the February snow
They long to lie outstretched on sun-warmed sand.
When autumn leaves rain down, they hold your hand,
Then quickly fill October's cobalt skies
With rules, recrimination, outright lies.
Too soon, you view a darkened horoscope,
Accept defeat, and losing every hope,
Throw all your August dreams on leaf piles where
They'll burn to ash, in consummate despair,
And join with earth to feed more fools' desires,
Until these end, consumed by future fires.

J.B. Sisson

To a Blackfly

Wee, sneaky, creeping, fiendish fly,
hobgoblin of June and July,
when you come flitting through the sky,
the balmy air,
oh, what an itch around an eye
and in my hair.

Maine is an earthly paradise
except for all that snow and ice,
and spring and summer are quite nice.
People survive
although we have to pay your price,
devoured alive.

Oh, blackfly, blackfly, let's not fight.
I won't slap you if you don't bite.
Let's think about *Gemütlichkeit*
for once today.
You really are a lovely sprite
in your sly way.

Karen Kelsay

A Troubled Lot

As Lot engaged in supper, rowdy neighbors
Disturbed his peaceful aura, shouting jeers;
He offered them his tender-minded daughters
(Which gave them insecurities for years).

It didn't help at all they were rejected
By every guy who pounded on the door;
At sunrise they were ready to relocate
And gamble on what else could be in store.

They didn't realize they'd live in mountains,
And have no running water or a sink;
The evenings were a drag unless they pilfered
A swig of booze they saw their father drink.

The prospect of a husband was unheard of,
They put their heads together, formed a plot,
Removed their nighties—slept with drunken daddy.
By winter two were added to the lot.

David Alpaugh

Mrs. Lilly's Opus

Money is a kind of poetry.
—Wallace Stevens

I have been eating poetry.
—Mark Strand

There is some shit I will not eat.
—e.e. cummings

Rejected again (and again and again)
By *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*—
Eli Lilly's pharmaceutical doyenne
Gets revenge by opening her purse:

“If Money's like *Poetry*, I'll win fame
Shoving millions up the editor's wazoo.
Argent poetica's the name of the game.
My goal? Inspire a clerihew or two.

So busy whoring after NASDAQ and Dow,
Their devotion to poetry will decline—
Poems become so bovine, Holy Cow!
They might even publish one of mine.”

When Money dines on Poetry, Poetry bleeds;
Lillies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

C.B. Anderson

A Fistful of Couplets Devoted to Coupling

*You can find women who have never had a love affair,
but seldom women who have had only one.*

—La Rochefoucauld

I've always had a thing for comely lasses
Equipped with curvilinear tight asses.

A well-turned ankle or a shapely leg
Can bring me to my knees and make me beg.

Pursuit of justice? Or pursuit of breasts?
The latter's where the prosecution rests.

A virgin may engage in oral sex
To cool her lust with fewer side-effects.

If you get horny, please consider us
Before self-pleasuring your clitoris.

Contributors

David Alpaugh lives in Pleasant Hill, California.
C.B. Anderson lives in Maynard, Massachusetts.
Peter Austin lives in Toronto, Canada.
Juliana Beedy lives in Framingham, Massachusetts.
Christopher Bittner lives in Norton, Massachusetts.
Russell Bittner lives in Ellicott City, Maryland.
Laura J. Bobrow lives in Leesburg, Virginia.
Catharine Savage Brosman lives in Houston, Texas.
Douglas G. Brown lives in Belfast, Maine.
Michael R. Burch lives in Nashville, Tennessee.
Derek Burgoyne lives in Uppsala, Sweden.
Jared Carter lives in Indianapolis, Indiana.
Sally Cook lives in Silver Creek, New York.
Wesli Court (Lewis Turco) lives in Dresden, Maine.
Frederick Feirstein lives in New York City, New York.
Daniel Fernandez lives in Brooklyn, New York.
Claudia Gary lives in Leesburg, Virginia.
Karen Kelsay lives in Orange, California.
X.J. Kennedy lives in Lexington, Massachusetts.
T.S. Kerrigan lives in Burbank, California.
David W. Landrum lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
Arthur Mortensen lives in Brooklyn, New York.
Richard O'Connell lives in Deerfield Beach, Florida.
Zsuzsanna Ozsváth lives in Richardson, Texas.
Malcolm Paige lives in Los Angeles, California.
Melissa Peralta-Hovejos lives in Bethesda, Maryland.
Jennifer Reeser lives in Westlake, Louisiana.
Tom Riley lives in Napa, California.
Candace Ruggieri lives in Washington, D.C.
Joseph S. Salemi lives in Brooklyn, New York.
E.M. Schorb lives in Mooresville, North Carolina.
J.B. Sisson lives in Eastport, Maine.
Lee Slonimsky lives in New York City, New York.

Carol A. Taylor lives in Houston, Texas.
Don Thackrey lives in Dexter, Michigan.
Frederick Turner lives in Richardson, Texas.
Angelique Wellish lives in Phoenix, Arizona.
Frank White lives in New York City, New York, and Alanya, Turkey.
Leo Yankevich lives in Gliwice, Poland.

Translated Writers

Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986)
Stanisław Grochowiak (1934-1976)
Ágnes Gergely (1933 – *adhuc vivit*)
Félix Lope de Vega (1562-1635)
Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz (1935 – *adhuc vivit*)
Sándor Weöres (1913-1989)

TRINACRIA

A statement of core principles

We publish no free verse at all. We publish formal metrical verse only, following the example of the great pre-modernist masters, and of those contemporary writers who maintain that tradition.

We are not interested in poems that employ an excessive number of substitute feet. If we have trouble finding the stresses in your line, we will not publish your work.

We do not consider syllabic verse to be metrical verse. Moreover, we have a very limited tolerance for hypermetric lines and heterometric forms.

We are allergic to mid-line breaks, or anything else that gratuitously violates typographical conventions. We prefer left-margin capitalization of every line, but we recognize that this is not the practice of all poets.

We believe that the register of language in poetry should always be distinct from that of ordinary colloquial speech.

We believe that an excessive dependence on slant-rhymes and assonance in end-position is a sign of incompetence.

We do not publish poems that are vague, gaseous, or that indicate a flaccid and sentimentalizing mindset.

We do not publish poems that are primarily quoted dialogue, nor poems that make extensive use of quotation marks.

We judge poems primarily by their inherent craftsmanship, not their subject matter. We see no reason to publish a mediocre poem just because it trumpets virtuous sentiments, or expresses sincere feelings. We specifically refuse to evaluate any poem by the yardstick of political correctness.

At the same time, we believe that subject matter is another ingredient that goes into the overall aesthetic effect of a poem. For that reason we will reject metrically excellent poems if we find their subject matter boring or trivial or fatuous; or if the subject matter is handled ineptly; or if the subject matter does not suit the chosen poetic vehicle.

We believe that poems are fictive artifacts of a self-contained nature. For us, any poem that pretends to a bogus authenticity; or that consciously cultivates dissonance and asymmetry; or that deliberately avoids aesthetic closure, is *ipso facto* a failure.

We have taken as our watchword the sentence of Charles Maurras: *Voulant des clartés, vous en faites.* We believe that the primary task of a poet is not to discover beauty, but to create it with his own skill and energy.



Voulant des clartés, vous en faites.

Privately printed, published, and distributed. Not for general sale.

TRINACRIA
ISSN: 1944-8759
Price: \$12.00

Publisher and Editor:
Joseph S. Salemi
New York City